The I/O Connector

The Newsletter of the San Diego Atari Computer Enthusiasts

SAN DIEGO ATARI COMPUTER ENTHUSIASTS

is an independent, non-profit organization and user group with no connection to the ATARI Corporation. Membership fees are currently $15.00 annually, from January 1 thru December 31 of the current calendar year. Membership includes free acess to the computer program library, subscription to the "I/O Connector", and classes when held. Permission to reprint articles in any non-commercial form is permitted with specific authorization, as long as proper credit is given.

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SAN DIEGO ATARI COMPUTER
ENTHUSIASTS
P.O. Box 203076
San Diego, Ca. 92120

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S.D.A.C.E. ST	S.D.A.C.E. ACE
Sysop: Rick DeHaven	Sysop: Eddie Woods
(619) 284-3821	(619) 566-3430
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SUBMISSIONS TO THE NEWSLETTER

are most welcome, and due by the 15th of the month for publication in the next month's newsletter. Mail double-spaced text or (returnable) disks with text files to the Editor.

BUY/SELL/TRADE

ads are free to members of S.D.A.C.E. members. Ads must be 25 words or less, typewritten copy, please. The Editor will accept ads at the meetings or those mailed in to the above correspondence address. Deadline for ads is the same for articles - 15th of the month.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Once again it is that time of the month, the time for me to sit down here at the computer and let it earn its keep in the household. As I sit here typing this column, a lot of things appear to be in the works, but nothing really definite is cast in stone. So, much of the following rumours are very much subject to change.

Rumour department: A local major ST software author has been poking around trying to find cartridge cases for an up coming product. No further comments or elaborations were available. When more is known you shall be the first to hear about it.

QMI, known for ST-TALK, a complete and inexpensive terminal program, will be showing its latest product for the ST. At this time little is known about the product except that it will be a cartridge that will have a clock in it as well as some sort of 'desktop' in it. Having the desktop in the cart would free up virtually all of the RAM in the computer for program usage.

Speaking of free RAM, with the value of the dollar falling against the Japanese Yen and the recent court ruling against the chip manufactures in Japan, the prices of RAM chips will be going up even higher than they have already gone up. Look for memory upgrades to start going up in price as the upgrade board makers have to re-purchase chips at the higher prices. So if your thinking about doing it, do it now.

STart magazine appears to be going bi-monthly rather than quarterly. The newest issue is available at your local dealers now. ST-gazette is available now at a few of the local Crown book stores.

The MIO board from ICD for the XE/XL computers appear to be running into a few last minute changes in specs and capabilities, thus slowing its release date down a bit.

Supra has a new 20 meg 3.5" hard-disk for the XE/XL out now for the same price as the original price of the 10 meg hard-disk that was shown at the last meeting.

More news is brewing on the hard-disk scene for the 8-bits. Scheduled for the October meeting is William Lurie. William is a member of LAACE and computer engineer by trade. He has come up with the least expensive way for 8-biters to enter the hard-disk crowd. He will be stopping in on us to show us his handywork. I've already seen it work, and work it does. Very well indeed. At about $100 for the interface, it is $150 less than the Supra interface alone.

To those of you that were able to make the last SDACE meeting this will be old news but to those who just didn't have the chance, here's what SDACE will consist of next year. SDACE shall remain a single group of members devoted to the Atari line of computers. Elected officials shall consist of the following: A President, 8-bit Vice President, ST Vice President, Secretary, and a Treasurer. Each of the respective VP's will be responsible for the appointment of the nessasary persons required for the operation of the respective SIG. A newsletter committee will be assembled to continue with the I/O connector. The meetings shall continue to be held at the same times and places until changes in them are required by need. I feel that with this new groundwork installed, SDACE will be a viable organization for some time to come.

Thanks go to those who helped out with the planning of the plumbing. Well I think that about wraps it up for another month. Remember, if you've bought something new for your computer, let us all benefit from your purchase. Bring it to the meetings and offer to do a demo of it! See ya there!

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

SAN DIEGO ATARI COMPUTER ENTHUSIASTS
First Thursday of the month at 6:30 pm
North Park Recreation Center
Adult Center

SAN DIEGO COMPUTER SOCIETY
Third Saturday of each month
12 noon: swap meet
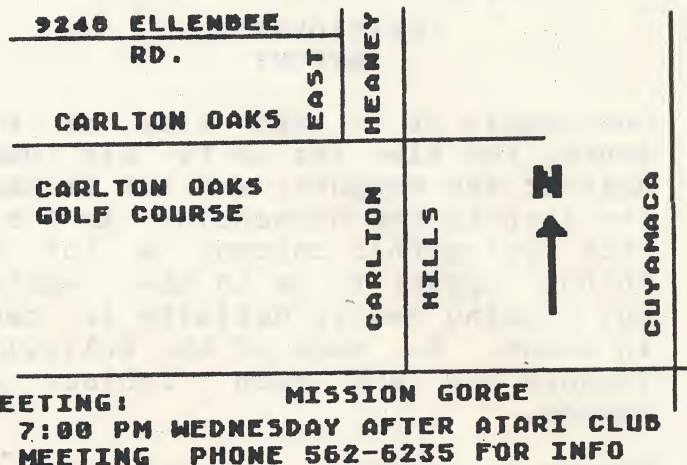1:30 pm: meeting
Mesa Collage, Apollo Theatre

ST SIG
Third Monday of each month at 6:30 pm
North Park Recreation Center
Social Room

ATR 8000 SIG
Fourth Wednesday of the month at 7 pm
See map for more info

ATR MEETING

9240 ELLENBEE RD.

CARLTON OAKS

EAST HEANEY

CARLTON OAKS GOLF COURSE

CARLTON HILLS

N

CUYAMACA

MISSION GORGE

MEETING:
7:00 PM WEDNESDAY AFTER ATARI CLUB
MEETING   PHONE 562-6235 FOR INFO

HARDWARE SIG
Each Saturday, times to be announced
4405 Hedionda Ct.
Call 483-4697 for more info

BASIC SIG
Call 223-6378 for more info
Meetings held in the Ocean Beach Area

The PS INTERFACE

by Steve Fishbein
(from PACE World July '86)

PRINT SHOP INTERFACE from Xlent Software contains routines which bridge Print Shop with Xlent's Typesetter program, as well as some utilities for Print Shop data disks.

Print Shop Interface is divided into three parts — a font maker, a graphics converter and a font converter. The graphics converter permits conversion of a Typesetter icon into a Print Shop icon, which had not been possible with other utilities. The converter also allows changing an uncompressed picture into the Screen Magic format of Print Shop. The program also has some additional conversion routines which had been available previously.

The PS Interface has utility routines that work with Print Shop icon disks. I was finally able to delete some bad files that would not load. The rename command also solved the problem of duplicate file names on the same disk. Because the program could only

load the first of two files with an identical name it had been impossible to recapture the other. Renaming the first file ended that dilemma. PS Interface also has a directory that reads the Print Shop Data Disk.

The font maker has features in common with the (Broderbund) Print Shop Companion's font creator, but also provides the ability to change a letter character into a picture. I look forward to exploring this feature in the future because it allows use of more than one graphic in a printout (outside of running a sheet through twice).

Finally, the PS Interface font converter takes Print Shop fonts and converts them to Typesetter fonts. What this means is that the Print Shop font can be made in four sizes; big, small, tall, and fat when reproduced with Typesetter.

USE PRINT SHOP FONTS & GRAPHICS

REVIEW
EPYX 500XJ JOYSTICK

This is a report on the latest in the world of high-tech joysticks. We have seen numerous sticks that claim to be the end all of the joystick world. Some with large handles for a good feel and others with a small ones for fast response. Buttons on the stick, buttons on the base, long cords, no cords. But even with the large variety of choices available to us seasoned gamers, I've always felt most comfortable with the good old Atari joystick. Light, responsive, and cheap. To all good things comes an end.

A few weeks ago Epxy sent me one of thier newest creations. The 500XJ. Almost a scary name. I opened the box and picked it up. Picking it up by the cord, it looked as though it had been melted in the box while in transit. But after a quick glance at the box to see just how to hold this thing I was off hard at work defending the galaxy from invaders.

This stick is different. It has been redesigned from the ground up. A molded contour grip for a comfortable hold without exerting extra force to hang on to it, smallish stick for a quick throw and faster response, a trigger button that falls right under your index finger again to allow for fast shooting. It certainly ranks amongst the best when it comes to comfort over the entire battle to defend freedom. Not only is it comfortable but it also is made from the best choice of materials I've seen in a home joystick.

Microswitches are used in all areas to give tactile feedback and to last at least 3 times longer than other sticks out there. 10 million pushes, that's what each switch is rated, over a nominal rating of 3 million for 'others' according to EPYX. They appear to be quite confident in the product, they offer a 5 year warranty on the stick! Not bad at all.

Ok, enough hype. Down to the real gut feelings. This stick works! I feel comfortable with it. I can play for longer periods because I do not have to hold on to it so hard. But, the only gripe I have is that the fire button is under the index finger. We have all grown up to use our thumbs to press the fire button. I was able to overcome my past thumb training and my scores did improve as promised. However, I'd still like to try this very same stick with a thumb trigger rather than a finger trigger. Other than that one point, I love the stick and use it almost all the time. I recommend that you find one and check it out yourself.

I am not sure at the moment how much it costs or even if it is available now. But it is definitely worth hunting one down for a trial spin. I bet you'll end up taking one home!

Rick DeHaven
S.D.A.C.E.

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(Chmn Keith) First off, we are proud to have ICD, Inc as our guest today. Anything you'd like to say, Tom?

(ICD-Tom) Sure, I am glad to have this opportunity to Chat with our users on Compuserve. I think the main strength of the Atari support system these days is the BBS.

(Chmn Keith) finished, Tom?

(ICD-Tom) Sure

(Chmn Keith) OK, then let's open the floor up for questions. First is Darius, then Mark.

(Darius) How will the MIO's 1 meg RAM be accessed? Through PORTB?

(ICD-Mike) The 1 Meg MIO will have hardware registers at the D100 and D600 areas.

(Chmn Keith) Darius => follow up on that question?

(Darius) How will the MIO 1 meg RAM be accessed? Through PORTB or will other locations be used?

(ICD-Mike) The MIO has registers at the D1C0-D1FF address range, for the most part the RAM is at the D600 memory page. What specifically were you wondering since that is fairly broad?

(Darius) Will software designed for the Newell upgrade or RAMBO XL work on it?

(ICD-Mike) No, the RAM is a "true" RAM disk... just like a floppy, therefore you do not need to "setup" the RAM disk as you did with the RAMBO/NEWELL with the RD type of command.

(Chmn Keith) but, you can STILL do an RD command along with the MIO..right, mike?

(ICD-Mike) Sure, the RD is ONLY for internal memory of the computer the MIO is a TOTALLY independent system. It handles its own RAM in a fashion best suited for the disk emulation and printer buffer.

(Mark(Toolworks)) I have a number of questions about MIO (as I am sure most of us do): 1) will the MIO rob me of my cart slot on 130xe? 2) will I get a Tech. Ref. Manual with MIO? 3) will MIO support Floppies? 4) can MIO support the Western Digital Controller? 5) is MIO RS232 850 compatable?

(ICD-Mike) 2 -- Yes, all registers are documented (very complete). 3 -- Yes, just like normal (except you also get to redirect). 4 -- Yes, WDC 1002S-SHD or 1002-SHD or 1002-SAS. 5 -- Yes (also does not take up internal user memory).

(Chmn Keith) Mike => I think we lost the answer to # 1, about the 130XE cart slot.

(ICD-Tom) 1 -- The 130XE requires a $19.95 adaptor which adds 2 slots to the bus.

(Robert Crosby) I've had an order in thru distribution for the 1 meg version. When can I expect to see it?

(ICD-Tom) It all depends on the distributor. That problem seems to occur with all new products. The way we ship is: End user orders get priority for the 1st few units. Then we start shipping to dealers and distributors eventually the back orders get filled.

(Robert Crosby) The order is thru Horizon....A guess when???

(ICD-Tom) ??? a couple of weeks???

(Robert Crosby) OK. Thanks.

(Chmn Keith) ok, we have Dick, Francis, Jim, Keith, Jerry, and then Bryan.

(dick) I've heard that you have plans to release SpartaDOS on a cart. Do you have plans to add new features to the cartridge version?

(ICD-Mike) The cart ver of SD will (its in the writing still) contain many new features: It has a built in database. The command processor is much more complex. It will mimic commands as it performs them (self tutoring). The current version (3.2) has been in a cart for testing for some time now, however the final SD X (as it is called around here) should be released in about 3 months and shall take about 32K -- 16K for database and 3.2 core and 16K for menu (also containing sophisticated batch file ability... You will have to pretty much see it for yourself when it does come out since it will end up being quite a bit different. Not just a rewrite.

(dick) Thx!

(Chmn Keith) ok..(hope you have a flag to turn that "tutoring" off..hehe).

(Francis) That is good. Is that SpartaDOS "random" access?

(ICD-Mike) SpartaDOS X (cart) handles files up to 16Meg with total random access, it takes a max of 1/10 sec to position to the middle of a file of that size... the sector map scheme has been modified so that a high level mapping scheme is running in parallel... thats why you have such high speeds (pos through 8Meg that fast)... the main reason for this is because the

database (large databases) required much positioning/loading (binary fashion) to find a record and a linear position is much to slow... Also insert/delete sectors in the middle of a file is required for database. This is one reason it is taking quite some time in developement... there is major rewrite in many areas.

(Francis) Is it done by POINT commands? (under ACTION! or BASIC XE)

(ICD-Tom) Mike has crashed for a minute hang on...

(Chmn Keith) hope he can get back in here.

(Francis) Hope he read my question.

(ICD-Mike) I think I'm back.

(Chmn Keith) ok, Mike... the question was "does it use POINTS or what"?

(ICD-Mike) SD X uses points just like always.

(Francis) Yes, but more than 64K?

(Chmn Keith) He meant for the built-in database, Mike.

(ICD-Mike) OK, for database it uses a set of database XIO commands

(Francis) Chmn, No I mean for ACTION! or BASIC XE.

(ICD-Mike) the commands perform the (skip that). For ACTION and BASIC XE. The POINT and NOTE functions handle the full 8Meg (limit of BASIC).

(Chmn Keith) ok, thanks Mike...

(Francis) good. Thanks.

(Jim Woods) When I got my R-Time 8 Cart it came with DOS 3.2d. What is the difference from 3.2d & 3.2b and is 3.2d the latest?

(ICD-Mike) I forget exactly... I think it has to do with BASIC XL and old OSS cart incompatibility... the cart would lock up the system when it booted up when it accessed the RT8. The other thing had to do with the way it handles input in the TIME and DATE commands... now batch files stop... overall, the differences are very minor.

(Jim Woods) is it the latest?

(ICD-Mike) 3.2d is the very latest (and has been for quite a few months)

(Jerry) 1) Is the Ramdisk Battery backed... I've heard

both it is and isn't; 2)How do you set the drive number of the MIO hardware or software.

(ICD-Tom) 1 -- The MIO uses a seperate power supply which is the same type as used with 1050 disk drives. There is not a battery back up provision unless you get a U.P.S.

(ICD-Mike) 2 -- The drive numbers (D1-D8) are set up by the MIO configuration... each drive number can be one of the following: 1. Hard drive (set partition, controller ID, and unit number). 2. RAM drive (set size). 3. Floppy drive (set actual floppy number... i.e. D4: could be floppy unit #1, but no software can tell the difference. 4. Unassigned... in which case it will access the regular ID as it normally would without the MIO

(Chmn Keith) Also, Jerry, I might add that the "config" pgm is resident. All you have to do is hit SELECT/RESET and up it pops! ok, ga Bryan, then Darius.

(ICD-Mike) (thanks Keith)

(BRYAN DREW) With that config prog, can I set multiple drives?

(ICD-Mike) Yes, the config assigns devices (RAM, Hard, Floppy) to all 8 drives and up to eight RAM, Hard, or floppies can be used (but the total is still a mix of any 8)

(BRYAN DREW) How about Percom DD emulation?

(ICD-Mike) The MIO RAM and Hard drives all are double density... the number of sectors are set by the config... I'm not sure I know what you're getting at.

(Darius) SpartaDOS 3.2 has trouble working with 1030 Express. Will the SpartaDOS X cartridge fix this? And any plans for a disk cache?

(ICD-Tom) It does? Could you answer that Keith?

(Chmn Keith) sure...The reason 1030 Express! won't work with 3.2 is that for some reason the T: handler that comes with the XM301 modem (which is what Express! uses) and SpartaDOS don't like each other. It causes SD to lock up the first time it tries to timestamp a file. The way around that is to use the TPATCH.COM that can be found in DL2. It turns the "timestamp" vector into a simple RETURN instruction. Also, you MUST do a KEY OFF command, since Express! steals the immediate VBI, and so does SD's keyboard buffer.

(Darius) But the patch keeps the time and date from advancing. Will Sparta X allow the XM301 handler to be used? And lastly, any plans for a disk cache?

(ICD-Mike) What do you mean by disk cache (more buffers? prereading?) ga

(Darius) Prereading.

(ICD-Mike) No, that is only possible on a multitasking

environment, the Atari can't handle this without be incompatible with most software. The SDX will use more buffers however, (again) The SDX has more buffers when used with the MIO which (hold on) will make it run much faster. The Xm301 handler we will try in SDX... so far neither Keith nor I have found the conflict... I hope that it will be taken care of and fixed...

(Chmn Keith) on the Express -- a new version will be out soon using a "relocatable" version of the xm301 driver. maybe that will fix the problem...

(Chmn Keith) ok, bill is next.

(Bill Colburn) Ok, sorry. Anyhow, I am from an IBM environment. I would like to be able to define a random access file to SD X with key definitions, etc. Then when I read/write a record, I want SD X to take over and handle the key stuff. Am I dreaming the impossible dream?

(ICD-Mike) You mean database with "INDEX" or key files?

(Chmn Keith) Mike..what he is asking is if the update of the...

(Bill Colburn) Yes, sort of. Are you familiar with VSAM???

(Chmn Keith) ...index and stuff is going to be "transparent" to the user... in other words, SD X will do it "automatically".

(Francis) BATCH files?

(ICD-Mike) Yes, SDX will do all key adds transparently, all you have to do is define you keys (i.e. what fields to keep it sorted by), from there you just add records (via XIO) and thats it. Other calls are: position within KEY (next record in same sorted manner), lookup record (by KEY), delete record and several others for flexibility.

(Bill Colburn) Is all this accessible from MY application program?

(ICD-Mike) Yes Bill, the calls are all from XIOs just like RENAME or DELETE.

(Bill Colburn) Sounds fantastic! How about utilities to unload and reorganize my keyed files???

(ICD-Mike) yes, after many adds and deletes, the key files become scattered throughout your disk and fill only partial sectors. A compacting (single pass) utility will read and reorganize the keys into a more compact file... the records themselves do not since it is a straight linear file with ability to remember

where deleted spaces are (note that these are strictly fixed length records).

(Bill Colburn) I got my VISA card out!! HOw much?? (and thanks)

(ICD-Mike) The cart will be 79.95 and will be availible in about 3 mos (hopefully).

(Chmn Keith) sounds great! next are Remus, larry, gary, francis, Abdul.

(Remus) Any plans to use an IF ... THEN ... ELSE to SD X? And can I config a hard drive as 5,6,and 7?

ICD-Mike) Yes, the batch file processing will handle: IF.. then.. else do ... while assignments (varibles etal) and possibly more structures (as fit and are practrical. THIS IS SOME OF The later decisions). The Hard drive can be any drive number you want... and may be several (MIO)

(Chmn Keith) mike, going to put the current directory in the prompt? Like D1:DOWNLOAD>?

(ICD-Mike) Very probable... this is fairly easy stuff and will be finalized in a month or so.

(Chmn Keith) ok..great.

(Larry Friday) I assume then that the MIO is still a volatile (RAM) item, unless you leave the power on.

(ICD-Mike) Yes, if it must NOT crash the RAM, a UPS is the way to go. They are expensive, but battery bckup is impractical since 1Meg RAM takes a lot of power (relative to CMOS 8K static RAMs).

(Chmn Keith) ok, gary then francis.

(Larry Friday) Yeah, that's what I thought too. Thanks.

(Francis) So, under BASIC, up to 8M, right? But Under ACTION, up to 16M, right? Is it correction: POINT #chan, OK-64K, 0-255 by mult 64K.

(ICD-Tom) Mike is off temporarily again (Dang ST) but let me continue. ACTION and other languages are 16Meg.

(Francis) Tom, I noted. So for MIO, how larger for hard drive so can up yo? Chmn, I am not finish yet.

(ICD-Tom) The MIO will handle any Hard drive the SASI or SCSI controller will take... for example: you can divide a 40 Meg into 2 16 Megs (lets say D1: and D6:)...

(Francis) I guess that MIO had no limit max. size of hard drive?

(ICD-Tom) ...then use the last 8K as another drive unit.

(Francis) See thanks! that is all.

(Abdul) Can the Ram in a 256k MIO be upgraded to say... 1 MEG?

(ICD-Tom) Sure, but it must be done by ICD. The MIO uses special DRAM ICs not normally avilable and no sockets. Price will be around $200 to upgrade.

(Abdul) ok thanx!!!

(Jerry) How much programing area will we have with the Cart and will prgs like...

(Francis) That is possible for hardware hacker can do it by himself.

(Jerry) ...Express be able to take advantage of the DOS in ROM and have large buffers.

(ICD-Mike) Tom is down... The SDX will take about the same amount...

(Chmn Keith) want me to field that one?

(ICD-Mike) ...of memory as does 3.2. We'll just have to wait and see.

(Chmn Keith) hmmm...same amount of memory even tho it is in a cartridge?

(ICD-Mike) The SDX still has to put much of its contents in RAM because the ROM can not be activated while running normal carts or programs in the cart area... however, the command proc will be ALL in ROM... this is one of the redeeming featues of this set up... the area the old command proc used to take up will be replaced with general expansion of the kernal (or FMS).

(Jerry) Oh well it would've been nice.

(Mark(Toolworks)) will ICD sell a kit for MIO ram upgrade?

(ICD-Tom) Absolutely not! Sorry Mark.

(Mark(Toolworks)) bummer!

(Francis) Mark, unless you are hardware hacker.

(Chmn Keith) hehe..ok, Robert.

(Robert Crosby) What's the current drain @ 9VAC for a 1 MEG MIO... I want to get started on a dedicated UPS early!

(ICD-Tom) About 1.5 amps

(Francis) 1.5 AMP! it like disk drive.

(Robert Crosby) OK thnks... 1 more.. What's the nature of the interconnection between the XL/XE and MIO...(How long is the cable?)

(ICD-Mike) the MIO sits behind the computer on a 3-4 inch ribbon cable... this is due to noise level of lines from the computer. As to 1.5 amps...this is a maximum, realistically its less than 1 amp, but when the 80col becomes availible, it will take at least 1.5... also, a floppy takes 3 amps and gets much hotter.

(Robert Crosby) Thanks again.

(Francis) speak of 80Col, It comes with the MIO?

(ICD-Mike) no, about 2-3 mos from now... it plugs on top of the MIO.

(Francis) I see. Don't you use 1Meg DRAM for 1Meg MIO?

(ICD-Mike) No, 256K x 1 DRAMS

(Jerry) Will the Cart be chainable like the Rtime cart?

(ICD-Mike) Yes, the SDX cart will be able to control (turn on/off) the cart plugged into it.

(Remus) I forsee a series of one-touch crashes with this stack of carts. Any thoughts about adding a cart expander out back of the XL bus? I know they aren't there as they are on an XE.

(ICD-Mike) You must stack the cart on top of the SD X cart because it controls the one on top, i.e. running BASIC XE with SD X...

(Remus) And R-8

(ICD-Mike) This is true even on the 130XE adapter for the MIO the RT8 can be plugged into the second slot 3 carts it won't get bumped too much. The RT8 and SD X carts are fairly sturdy, but, you must take care.

(Remus) Yeah, the cart port on this XL is kinda wore out. Thx!

(Robert Crosby) I know that the hope is that your 80col will be software compat. with Atari's; What do the chances for this look like?

(ICD-Mike) well, it will be about the same compatibility as the AFA 80 col was for the 800. There is NO way to get true compatibility since just the fact that were using 80 cols implies this. You would have to pick up the data put in screen ram and convert to 80 col... this is virtually impossible, however, it is compatible on the E: level (that is through the CIO) just like the Atari XEP80 will be. We plan on giving more than Atari's version (like all our products).

(Chmn Keith) Tom and Mike...we have been running about 2 hours now. How are you doing on time? Want to carry on for a while?

(ICD-Mike) Just fine. Sure.

(Robert Crosby) How about DMA on for 40 cols when both monitors are connected?

(ICD-Mike) what do you mean?

(Francis) I think he mean you could both video output of atari and 80col for one monitor.

(Chmn Keith) gonna follow up, Robert?

(Francis) (unless i am mistaken)

(ICD-Mike) ==> Francis thats not what he meant. But in answer to your question, no, you can not get the 40 col to go through...

(Robert Crosby) sorry...died momentarily at this end

(ICD-Mike) ...the MIO video... it is not availbible through the parallel port and is not worth connecting into the MIO case (would cost alot)

(Robert Crosby) what I meant was whether BOTH a 40 col and 80 col (thru MIO 80 col) could be updated simultaneously?

(Francis) Oh. I see

(ICD-Mike) yes, 80 col and 40 col are seperate systems... the 40 col requires the DMA, and the 80 does not... however, the E: handler will not print to both simutaneously.

(Robert Crosby) The reason for asking: Atari kills DMA when sending to the 80 col board.

(ICD-Mike) For the Atari, it is necessary for serial transmission (timing)... for our 80 col, it is not necessary... however, when the 80 col is enabled (through MIO config), the 40 display will be turned off... an XIO to it will be able to re-enable the 40 col or you can reenable it yourself through programming... it does not matter to the proper functioning of the 80 col adapter.

(Jim Woods) my question has been answered but let me give ICD an "attaboy good job guys with all your products!"

(Chmn Keith) I agree with that! now, I have a couple of quick questions... first... with the X cart, will us US Doubler owners be able to boot normal dos-2.0 type disks at high speed? (ala SCOPY)? Also, will the 80 col display be able to be used with custom display lists?

(ICD-Mike) NO... display lists are things for ANTIC and 40 cols ONLY. It takes custom chips for stuff like that and is intended for game type stuff. If you wanted, you can program the video controller for the 80 col and get things like scrolling and setting display beginning pointer.

(Chmn Keith) (or term program status lines!!).

(Remus) You mentioned the AFA board. It was RGB. Does this mean the 80 col enhancement will be RGB? Or even color?

(ICD-Mike) It will be at least RGB (the design has not been finalized yet... we are not sure exactly how far to go with it... we have thrown around ideas of analog RGB (AFA is digital RGB called IRGB) and bit mapped graphics, but we'll settle on this soon... alot depends on what people will want and are willing to spend for...

(Remus) Have you decided on a controller?

(ICD-Mike) ...it... Once a design has been settled on, it should only be about 1 1/2 mos to get into the market. Its far easier than the MIO because it needs no case or many connectors... BY THE WAY -- We will be selling AFA 80 col boards and IRGB adapters for these... we have hundreds for sale (this is of course for the 800 computers... NOT the 800XL or 130XE).

(Chmn Keith) francis is next. (Tom, let me know when you are ready to hang it up here).

(Remus) What's pricing on AFAs

(ICD-Mike) AFA boards are $100 and IRGB are $30

(Francis) Are you planning to sell 4-Meg or 8Meg MIO? And is that SpartaDOS X automatic to load like you boot old SD?

(ICD-Tom) No on the memory expansion it is not possible with the 6502 map that is the Atari memory map. What do you mean? automatic to load Francis?

(Francis) I mean, wnen you plug SpartaDOS X, will it load quickly when you boot (or power up) Like you boot SpartaDOS 3.2c. (or Fixed DOS?)

(ICD-Tom) It will be instant high speed (unlike disk versions) and the DOS is already loaded just a brief delay for system initialization.

(Francis) Good. THX.

(Chmn Keith) ok, we have time for Abdul and then Duane, then we will shut down here.

(Abdul) What is special about the DRAMS in the MIO board?

(ICD-Mike) They are a different type of package (not DIP) for space conservation... they're much more than std DRAMS since they are not discounted all over the place. Therefore, (that was

cost much more) you will be able to beat our prices even if you did try to expand (sorry again -- that is will NOT be able to beat our prices for the upgrade)... having typing probs anyway, we also do not want lots of MIOs coming back with bad attempts at upgrading that will definately void all warranties.

(Abdul) I see... many thanx and keep up the good work! ABdul out.

(Chmn Keith) sounds like Abdul has the soldering iron out (hehe).

(DUANE) WILL MIO BYPASS RAMBO XL ?

(ICD-Tom) Since the MIO is addressed differently both can be used at the same time... Just use them as different drive numbers.

(Chmn Keith) well, in closing down, and since everyone seems real interested in the MIO board, I can tell you that it really is an incredible piece of hardware. I received mine (1 MEG) last thursday, and have it configured for (get ready to drool..hehe) a 128K print buffer and a 895K RAM disk which I BOOT from. it's great! I think we should all applaud ICD for both being here with us as well as all of the great Atari products they continue to put out!!

(dick) <APPLAUSE -- CHEERS for MIO>

(Abdul) cheers!!!

(Robert Crosby) Absolutely!!

(Remus) Bravo!

(Chmn Keith) any closing comments, Tom and Mike?

(DUANE) HERE HERE

(Jerry) Good Work..Keep it up!

(Sarge) bravo

(ICD-Mike) Thanks for having us on... We appreciate all the support that you guys are giving us... As long as products keep selling the way they are we'll keep supporting you... again thanks

(ICD-Tom) And don't forget to send money with all those requests (hehe)

(ICD-Mike) And thanks for keeping things in order Keith. ga

(Robert Crosby) It's on its way!

(Chmn Keith) myself, I can't remember ANY Atari

product raising as much interest as this MIO board. I have a feeling that the transcript of this CO is going to be a HOT item!! Thanks again for coming to Tom and Mike!

(dick) Excellent CO!

(ICD-Tom) Please use a spelling checker!

(Mike Schoenbach) Great CO guys!

(ICD-Mike) (With some editing... its hard to always get the flow)

(ICD-Tom) Thanks for having us!

(Chmn Keith) you guys make me wonder why I wasted money on an ST!! This CO is now officially over. I will stick around for a while if anyone wants to ask me anything about the MIO board.

(ICD-Mike) bye?

(Mike Schoenbach) Take care, Tom & Mike.

P:R: CONNECTION
ICD, Inc.

A review by Bruce Jividen
from Compute!

The P:R: Connection is a low cost replacement for the expensive, obsolete, and often hard to find Atari 850 Interface. It includes a centronics parallel port and two RS-232C serial ports. These ports are necessary if you intend to use most non-Atari printers or modems with your computer.

The interface comes with a detailed 50 page manual that includes the source code for the unit's "R:" handler. A disk is also included which contains Amodem 7.2, 850 Express!, Rscope, and PRC.SYS, a "translator" type program which must be added to some terminal programs like HomeTerm. While the P:R: Connection was made as a replacement for the 850, it's definitely not an 850, but should be compatible with all programs that load the R: device from the interface. Those that don't may require the PRC.SYS program.

The interface has two internal dip switches that will allow you to use your interface with an Atari direct connect printer, and/or automatically send line feeds to the printer after carriage returns. The manual has a detailed section discussing various XIO, CIO, and SIO commands.

This product, like many others, will not work on a 1200XL computer (see the article related to this for further information).

The interface is compatible with my 2 printers and my Supra Microstuffer, as well as all the printer and modem software I have. If you're looking for a printer and modem interface, this unit is a good, inexpensive, compatible alternative to the 850 interface.

The Back Fence

............by Quinn....................

MIRAGE DOESN'T LIVE THERE ANYMORE...

Someone said that Mirage Concepts, (H&D-Base, H&D-Forth, etc.) have stopped answering their phones. Sure enough, calls to both their Fresno main number and (800) number get a "no longer in service" message from the phone company. Also, Fresno directory assistance has no listing for Mirage anything. One local dealer mumbled something about Mirage having "some, er, temporary, um, trouble with the phones..." Huh? Another dealer says, nope, they gone. Still selling the products? Yep. Support? "We'll do what we can from here."

Too bad, Mirage. Requiescat In Pacem. (For you programmer types, that's Latin for "Have a nice eternity.")

PUT A LITTLE DRIVE IN YOUR LIFE...

If anyone is interested in a third-party floppy drive package like Shanner's, but one that works, there is reason to believe that a company here on the Coast is thinking seriously about it. Raise your voices to the heavens, or at least to Atari's ST BBSs. It is known that the suspect company watches that board for signs of interest.

DIGITAL WHO?

Have you wondered why we haven't seen GEM-Write, GEM-Draw, GEM-Paint or GEM anything else on the ST dealer's shelves? Word through the gripe-vine has it that DRI, those wonderful folks who brought us the desktop and all its terrific limitations, don't want to be linked to a toy computer like the ST. They would rather be seen as a serious operating system house tied to a technological leader like the IBM PC.

If GEM-anything happens for the ST, apparently it's going to be up to Atari to come up with bucks for a license and do the development themselves. Given the well known philosophy of spending over at the Borregas Avenue Bit Bashing Club (Atari), we may sooner see the Hades Invitational Ice Skating Competition.

Other topics concerning that GEM of a DOS...there is indeed a built in limitation on the number of directories (folders) that you can have on a hard disk (about 40, give or take 20), and that may or may not be a contributing factor in how long it's taken Atari to get the hard drive out. (So much for DRI as a serious operating system house.)

Knowledgable sources expect a fix via a new set of ROMS by the first of next year. Until such a fix occurs, though, a hard disk is of very marginal usefulness. To remain consistent with DRI's "desktop metaphor" and the cute little icons, it's like having a four drawer file cabinet with five large file folders permanently stapled in each drawer. From their perspective, I guess that's reasonable. After all, how many games do you need on one toy computer?

AVAST, YE PIRATES...

The software piracy issue is alive and well and was recently seen in a Compuserve on-line conference of ST software developers. At the heart of the matter seems to be the attitude on the part of some software developers that the only reason they aren't rich is that everyone is stealing their software. (The whole transcript of the conference is available for D/L on Compuserve.) To the developers' credit, they agreed that copy protection (at least in software) is not a solution to the problem (and, yes, there IS a problem). To their detriment, there was evidence of some less than charitable (to be charitable) attitudes among them.

One conference participant (whose name shall remain confidential but whose initials are Mark Skapinker from Batteries Included) actually offered the philosophy (paraphrased) that people are basically dishonest and given the chance, they will steal anything they can get their sticky little fingers on. (Does that make developers dishonest, too, or aren't they people?)

Some of the developers also espoused the idea that "the guy next door" who casually copies a program for a friend is the biggest cause of lost revenue. Acknowledged, there's a lot of bootlegged, pirated, stolen software circulating in the user community.
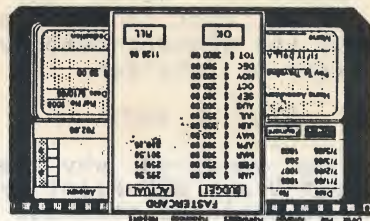
I'm neither defending nor condoning that. I'm proposing that the reason for that phenomenon is not the basic dishonesty of humanity, but a perceived lack of value in the software. I think that many of the people who have a copy of a program wouldn't buy it anyway. That's not lost revenue, it's weak sales. And weak sales don't come from piracy nearly as much as from bad software, poor support, incomprehensible documentation and arrogant software companies.

Maybe if software companies spent as much time perfecting their products as they do protecting them, they would find the world a much more profitable place.

As usual, the opinions expressed herein are mine and not necessarily those of the SLCC, the SLCC JOURNAL or its staff. For a moderate fee, they may be available for lease or purchase. Call for details.